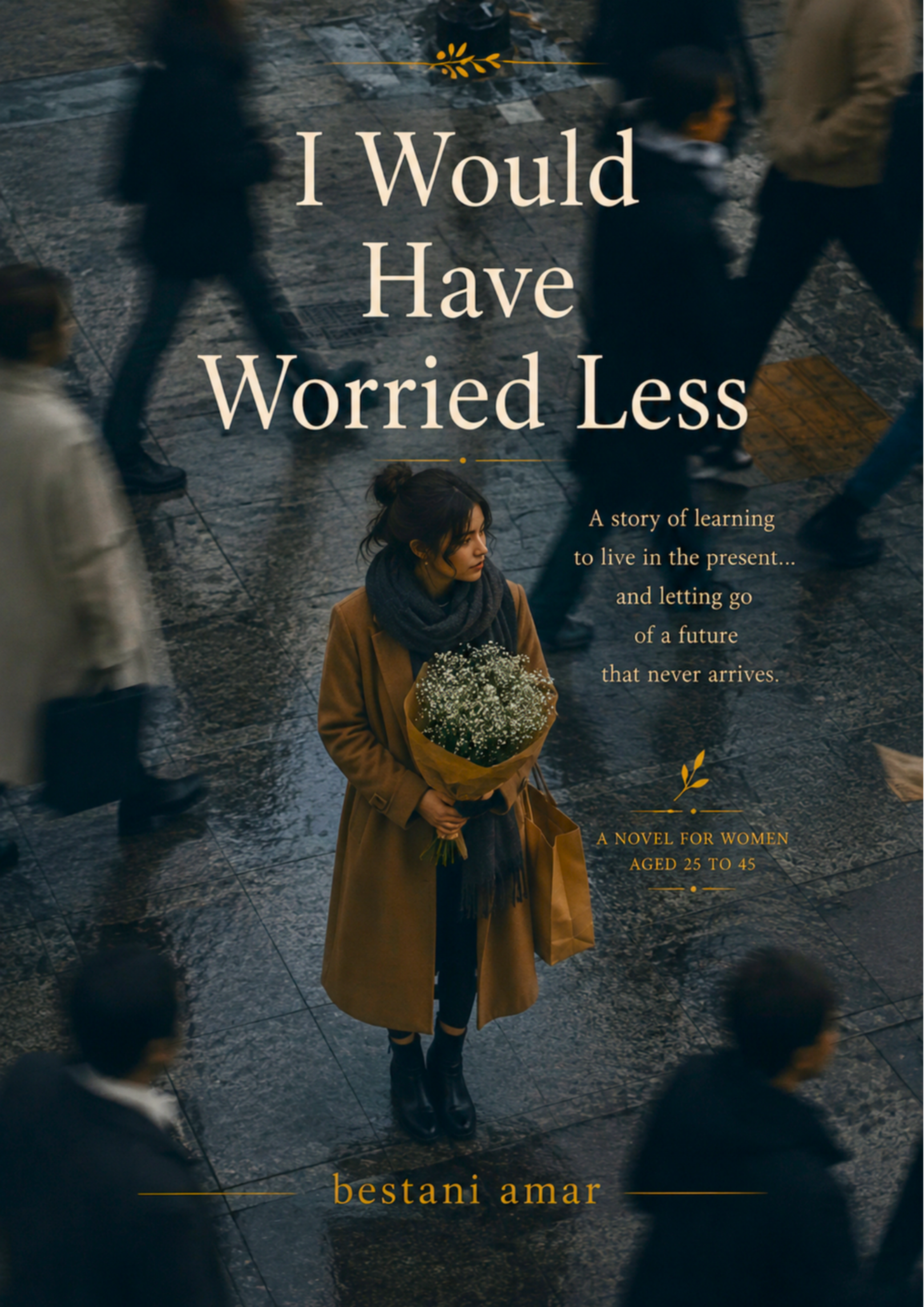
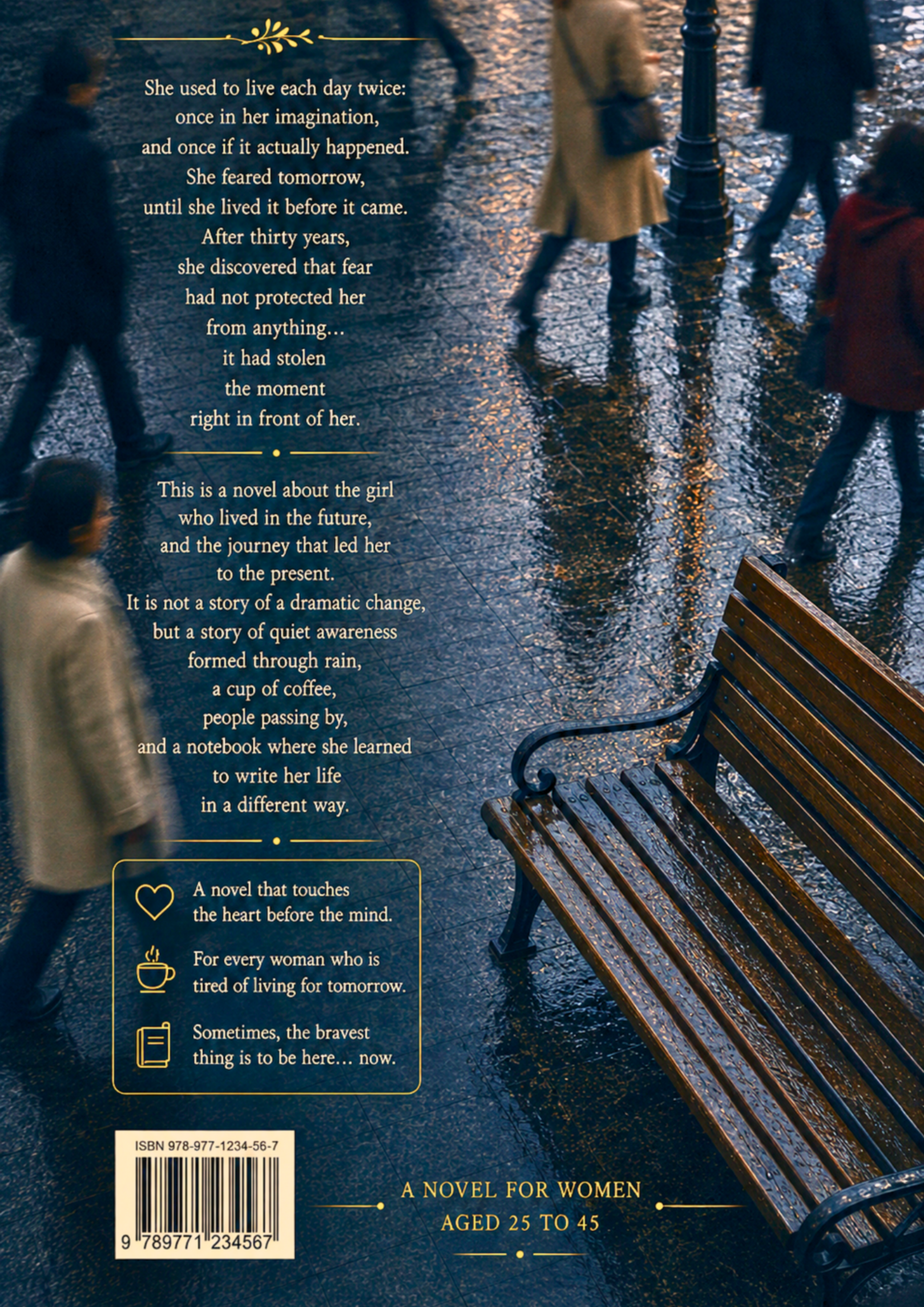


I Would Have Worried Less

A story of learning
to live in the present...
and letting go
of a future
that never arrives.

A NOVEL FOR WOMEN
AGED 25 TO 45

bestani amar



She used to live each day twice:
once in her imagination,
and once if it actually happened.
She feared tomorrow,
until she lived it before it came.
After thirty years,
she discovered that fear
had not protected her
from anything…
it had stolen
the moment
right in front of her.

This is a novel about the girl
who lived in the future,
and the journey that led her
to the present.
It is not a story of a dramatic change,
but a story of quiet awareness
formed through rain,
a cup of coffee,
people passing by,
and a notebook where she learned
to write her life
in a different way.

- A novel that touches the heart before the mind.
- For every woman who is tired of living for tomorrow.
- Sometimes, the bravest thing is to be here… now.

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9 789771 234567

A NOVEL FOR WOMEN
AGED 25 TO 45

I Would HaveWorried Less

Bestani amar

.I don't remember whenIstarted being afraid

I only know that I was always astepahead of life. While others were living their day, I was alreadylivingtomorrow. I thought this was wisdom—anticipating everythingbefore it happened. But I discovered, years later, thatIhadn'tsaved myself from anything. I had simply lived everythingtwice:once in my imagination, and once if it actually happened.Andsometimes… it never happened at .all

This is the storyofagirlwholivedin the future, and the quiet journey that broughtherbacktothe present. Not a story of dramatic change,butofsmall,everyday moments—rain on a window, a cup of coffee,anotebook,and the people who taught her that the bravest thingisnottostopfearing, but to stop letting fear .choose for her

If you have ever felt thatyourmindruns faster than your heart, this .story is for you

Novel: I Would Have Worried Less

Chapter One

.Idon't remember when I started being afraid

.Ionly know that I was always a step ahead of life

.When others were living their day, I was already living tomorrow

.And when tomorrow arrived, I had already begun fearing the day after

.Iused to think this was wisdom

Iused to tell myself that a sensible person anticipates everything before .it happens

And every time I succeeded in predicting something bad, I felt I had .saved myself

Until I discovered, years later, that I had never saved myself from .anything

.Iwas simply living everything twice

.Once in my imagination

.And once, if it actually happened

.And sometimes… it never happened at all

.That morning, I left the house like any other morning

:My mother said to me before I closed the door

".Don't forget to smile"

.I smiled at her

.I was good at smiling

.It had become a habit that required no feeling

.On the way, I was thinking about the job interview

.The interview wasn't that day

.It was in three days

.Just three days

".But my mind didn't understand the meaning of "in three days

It was acting as though I would sit before the hiring committee in ten .minutes

?What should I wear

?What if I forgot my own name

?What if they asked me a question I didn't know

?What if I got flustered

?What if they noticed my fluster

?What if they thought my degree outshone my ability

?What if they discovered I wasn't as smart as everyone thought

.I knew most of these questions had no answers

…And yet

.my mind didn't stop producing them

It was like someone sitting in a dark room, knocking on the door every :minute, just to ask

"?Are you sure"

.I got on the bus

.I sat by the window

.I wanted to watch people

.I've always loved watching people

.Not out of curiosity

.But because I believed their lives were simpler than mine

.They talked, laughed, got off at their stops, then disappeared

:I would look at them and think

?How can a person live an entire day without being afraid of anything

.Then I would laugh at myself

.Because I didn't really know anything about them

…I knew everything about my fear

.and nothing about theirs

Things That Never Happened

?If you asked me today: What tires you out the most in life

.I wouldn't say: failure

.Nor loneliness

.Nor even anxiety

:I would say

.The things that never happened

.It might sound strange

But I spent many years exhausted by things that never occurred, crying .over endings that never began, and fearing paths I never even took

.I thought I was protecting myself

It never occurred to me that a person could build an entire prison out of .mere possibilities

---

.I was thirty when I started to understand that

.Not because something big happened

.But because I was tired

…Tired of being the first to wake up when danger appeared

.even when there was no danger

.That morning, I left the house a little late

:My mother said as she adjusted the edge of my headscarf

".Don't come back late"

.I smiled

.My mother loved short sentences

.As for me, I turned every sentence into an entire life

".Don't come back late"

.I didn't hear it as she said it

:I heard it like this

?What if the bus broke down

?What if I got lost

?What if there was a fight on the road

…What if

My mind always insisted on adding the words "what if" to the end of .everything

.Even the simple words

.I used to think everyone did that

…Then I discovered that most people live the sentence as it is

.while I lived whatever came after it

.I arrived at the station

.An elderly woman sat on the wooden bench

.She carried a small bag with bread and some vegetables

.I sat beside her

.We didn't speak

.But I was looking at her hands

There's something about a person's hands that reveals their age more .than their face

.Wrinkles don't appear suddenly

.They accumulate patiently

…As if the years don't write their age on the face

.but on the hands

.I kept staring at them

.Then I raised my hand without realizing it

.I compared them

.I laughed inwardly

.Not because it was funny

.But because I saw something I wasn't ready to see

…In one moment

.I saw my hands forty years from now

.I don't know why my mind does that

…It finds a small image

.then opens an entire future from it

.The woman turned to me

.She smiled

:Then she said quietly

"?Do you work"

:I said

".I'll start soon… God willing"

:She said

".Lovely"

.Then she paused a moment

:And added

"?And married"

.Only then did I feel that the question wasn't just a question

.It was a small stone dropped into a still lake

:I said

".No"

.She smiled again

:And said

—

".Your share will come"

.Then she looked at the road

…As for me

.I no longer saw the road

…About a month earlier

.I was sitting with my friend in a small café

:She suddenly said to me

".You know what? I think you'll get married before all of us"

.I laughed

:And said, with a confidence I was trying to believe

".I don't think I'll get married at all"

.She looked at me, puzzled

"?Why"

.I hesitated for a moment

:Then I said

".Because I prefer solitude over regret"

.The sentence sounded wise

.Even I liked it

…But the truth

.is that I didn't tell her what was really going through my mind

.I didn't tell her that I was afraid

.I read every divorce story as if it were a personal warning

…I heard about a cruel husband

.and I imagined my husband would be just like him

…I read about a woman who lost herself after marriage

.and I imagined I would lose myself too

.I collected the worst possibilities

…Then I called the outcome

.a rational decision

.The elderly woman's voice brought me back

.A small child was running toward her

:He shouted, laughing

"!Grandma"

.She took his hand

.As if her hand had always known its natural place

.I didn't think about the child

.I thought about the woman

.She was my age once

.Then the years passed

…Until she became the grandmother

.and there was someone who called her by that word with such warmth

.I turned my face toward the window

:And I asked myself a question I didn't want to hear

…If I keep running from every painful possibility

?what possibility will I actually arrive at

.I didn't know the answer

…But for the first time

.I didn't feel that my fear was protecting me

…I only felt

.that it was choosing my life instead of me

Chapter Two

The Night Before Tomorrow

.I returned home shortly before sunset

.Everything was just as it always was

.The smell of food in the kitchen

.The sound of the television in the living room

And my father reading the newspaper the same way he did every evening; I don't know if he actually read the news, or if he had simply .gotten used to flipping through the pages

.Sometimes I envied them

.Not because their lives were easier

.But because they lived the moment they were in

…As for me

.I lived the moment that hadn't yet arrived

:My mother said, as she set the plates on the table

".A message arrived for you"

.Iturned to her

"?What message"

.She smiled

".From the company"

.Ifelt something like joy

The kind of joy that comes quickly, then doesn't take long to open the .door to something else

.Iopened the message

.The interview was scheduled for two days from now

.Iread the line more than once, even though I understood it the first time

.My father congratulated me

.My mother said she had been praying for me for days

.I smiled

.Ithanked them

Ieven began speaking enthusiastically about the job, the place, the .salary, as if I were confident about everything

.Iwas good at this role

.The role of the girl who seems reassured

.I entered my room

.I closed the door

.Silence sat on the chair across from me

.As if someone had been waiting for me inside

.I placed the message on the desk

.And everything began

?What should I wear

.I stood in front of the closet

.I took out the blue shirt

.Then I put it back

.Maybe it looked too formal

.I took out the white one

.It might get dirty easily

?The black one

.It might make me look grim

.I closed the closet

.Then I opened it again

.I wasn't looking for clothes

.I was looking for reassurance

.But I was searching in the wrong place

.I sat on the edge of the bed

.And I imagined the interview

.I walked in

.I said hello

.The manager smiled

.He asked for my name

.I answered

.Then he asked me a question I didn't know

.I fell silent

.He looked at me, puzzled

.He gave a small smile

:Then he said

".Thank you… we'll call you"

.The interview was over

.I left

.I returned home

.I told everyone I hadn't been accepted

.I saw my mother's disappointment

.And my father's silence

.Then I heard a voice I knew well

"?Didn't I tell you"

.It was my own voice

.I opened my eyes

.I was still in my room

.Nothing had happened

.I hadn't gone to the interview

.No one had asked me anything

.And I hadn't failed

…And yet

.my heart was pounding as if all of it had actually happened

.For the first time, I noticed something strange

…My body didn't distinguish much between what was happening

.and what I imagined happening

.I approached the window

.Across the street, a child was learning to ride his bike

.He falls

.Then he gets up

.He falls again

.Then he laughs

.His father was walking behind him without holding the bike

.He let him fall

.Then he let him try again

.I watched them for a few minutes

:And I thought

…If that child thought like me

.he wouldn't have gotten on the bike at all

:He would probably say

.I might fall

.I might break my arm

.People might laugh

.I might fail

…So

.I won't try

.The idea sounded logical

.But the child in front of me didn't know this logic

…And that was why

.he was learning

.I went back to bed

.And I turned off the light

:I told myself

".Tomorrow I'll try to sleep early"

.Then I smiled

.I knew that sleep doesn't come when you command it

.Just like reassurance

…The more I ran after it

.the further it slipped away

.I stayed awake

.Listening to the hands of the clock

.Watching the thoughts enter one by one, without asking permission

…That night

.forthefirsttime,Ibegantosuspectthatthe problem wasn't the world

…Perhaps

.it was the way I was seeing it

Chapter Three

.Onthemorningoftheinterview,Iwokeup before the alarm went off

.It wasn't because of excitement

.It was because of the thoughts

Iopenedmyeyes,andIfeltasthoughmy mind had been awake before .me

.I didn't think about the interview first

.I thought about the road to it

.Then about the road I would return from

.ThenIthoughtthatifIleftfiveminuteslate, I might miss the bus

.And if I missed the bus, I would arrive late

.AndifIarrivedlate,theywouldthinkIwas undisciplined

…And who knows

.maybethosefiveminuteswouldbethereason they wouldn't hire me

.I got up

.Then I stopped

.I smiled at myself

:I said in a faint voice

"…Amazing"

.Nothing had happened yet

…And yet

.I had lived half a full day before I even left my bed

.I knew this happened to me often

.My mind didn't like emptiness

…If it found a small possibility

.it gave it a home, furniture, and an entire future

.Sometimes I envied it

If it used this ability to solve math problems, or to write novels, I might .have become a different person

…But it used it for only one thing

.surviving things that never happened

.On the way to the company, I passed by a small bridge

.It wasn't long

.And people crossed it without even looking down

.I stopped for a moment

.I remembered an old conversation with my friend

:She once said to me

"?If you were afraid of car accidents, would you stop riding in cars"

.I laughed that day

:And I said

".No, because the probability of an accident is low"

:She smiled and said

Then why do you give some possibilities a right that you don't give to"
"?others

.I didn't understand what she meant that day

…But now

…as I looked at the bridge

.I began to understand

.The possibility that the bridge would collapse existed

.That was a fact

…But the existence of a possibility

.didn't mean it would happen

…Otherwise

.no one would ever leave their house

.No one would ever board a plane

.No one would ever love another person

.No one would ever have a child

.Everything carried a possibility

.But life wasn't lived by possibility

.It was lived by what was right in front of you now

.I crossed the bridge

.Not because I had become brave

.But because people had been crossing it for years

.And because someone, one day, had trusted the engineers who built it

.I laughed inwardly

:Then I said

…The strange thing is that I trust an engineer I don't know"

".but I don't trust myself, and I've known her for thirty years

.That was the first time my mind mocked itself

…And for the first time

.I didn't hate that mockery

.I arrived at the company's door

.I placed my hand on the handle

.I felt my heart quicken

.It could convince me to turn back

.It could tell me I wasn't ready

.It could promise me that the next opportunity would be better

.But it couldn't say anything new anymore

.I had heard all of its arguments before

.All of them

.I took an ordinary breath

.Not a deep one

.Not like what the books say

.Then I opened the door

.And I went in

…While my fear remained

.outside, waiting for me to return

Chapter Four

.The interview wasn't difficult

.And that's what bothered me

.I had spent two full days preparing for questions no one asked me

.I expected them to test my knowledge

.But they only wanted to know if I could work with them

:The man sitting across from me asked

"?Can you work under pressure"

.I almost laughed

…If I had told him the truth

:I would have said

".I've been living under pressure for years"

.But I just smiled

:And I said

".I try"

.I left the company

.The sky was overcast

.A light rain began to fall

.I didn't open my umbrella

.I loved the rain

.Perhaps because it didn't ask anyone to be happy

.I passed by a small shop

.Its owner was trying to bring in a large box by himself

.A young man crossing the street stopped

.He left his phone in his pocket

.And he placed his hand under the box

.They didn't speak

.They lifted the box together

.Then each continued on his way

.I stood watching them

…I thought

?how many times had I assumed people wouldn't help me

?And how many times had I actually tested that assumption

.I don't remember

.I arrived at the bus stop

.I sat waiting

.Beside me stood a man carrying a little girl

.She was pointing at the birds, trying to count them

:She said

".One… three… five"

.The man laughed

:And said

".You forgot two"

.She looked at him, puzzled

.Then she started counting again

.This time she also got it wrong

.But he didn't tell her she was a failure

.He didn't tell her she couldn't count

…All he did

.was let her try again

.I kept thinking about that

?Why did I allow myself only one mistake

?Why did I treat myself in a way I wouldn't even treat a child

---

.The bus arrived

.I sat by the window

.I was tired

.Not from the interview

.From the days that preceded it

…Sometimes

.imagination is more exhausting than reality

.My phone rang

.It was my mother

:She asked me

"?How was the interview"

.I looked at the street

:Then I said

".Ordinary"

.She paused for a moment

:Then she said

".Thank God"

.I hung up

.And I discovered something strange

…The only word I used to describe the interview

".was "ordinary

…But in my head

.it had been a battle

…How many battles had I fought

?and the world knew nothing about them

And how many times had people returned to their homes after an …ordinary day

?while I was returning from a war no one could see…

.When I arrived home, I took off my shoes at the door

:I heard my father say from the living room

"?How was your day"

:I answered without thinking

".It was ordinary"

.Then I went up to my room

.I sat on the bed

.I rested my head against the wall

.And I closed my eyes

.There was a small question turning inside me

…So quiet

.that I almost didn't hear it

…If reality

…was lighter than everything I had imagined

…how many times had I wronged tomorrow

?before it even arrived

Chapter Five

.I can't pinpoint when all of this began

.Sometimes I try to find a clear starting point, and I can't

".There's no big event I can point to and say: "This is where I changed

.My life was ordinary

.And perhaps that's why it was harder

.I remember myself in school

.I wasn't always the top student

.But I was afraid of not being so

Every time the teacher returned the exam papers, I felt my heart race .ahead of my name

.I wasn't afraid of the grade

.I was afraid of what the grade meant

…If I got a low mark

.it meant I hadn't worked hard enough

…And if I hadn't worked hard enough

.it meant I would fail

…And if I failed

.I wouldn't become the person I wanted to be

.I would leap from one step to another at a speed no one understood

…A single grade

.could transform, in my head, into an entire future

.One time, I got a mark lower than I had expected

.I came home crying

.My mother held me

:And she said gently

".Just a test"

".But I didn't hear the word "just

…I only heard

".a test"

.And the word kept growing

.A test

.Then an exam

.Then a future

.Then an entire life

.Today, when I remember that scene, I smile

.Not because my mother was wrong

.But because I was adding words to hers that she never said

…I discovered that a person doesn't only live by what they hear

.but by what they add to what they hear

.I used to watch people a lot

.Perhaps more than I should

If I saw someone embarrass themselves in front of others, the scene .would stay in my mind for days

.Not because I pitied them

:But because I told myself

.Remember this"

".Don't do what he did

.I collected others' mistakes the way someone collects road maps

.I think I was trying to reach a life where I never made a mistake

…It never occurred to me that this life

.didn't exist in the first place

.In university, I would review my presentation dozens of times

.I'd write the sentence

.Then I'd delete it

.Then I'd write it another way

.And I'd imagine the professor's face

.Then the face of a classmate sitting in the back

:Then I'd hear, in my imagination, someone saying

".She wasn't prepared"

.No one had said it

.But I heard it

.Clearly

.There's something strange about the mind

…If it repeats an idea often enough

.the person begins to treat it as if it were a memory

…They no longer distinguish between what they actually lived

.and what they repeated in their imagination

That's why, when I stood before a new situation, I wasn't entering it for .the first time

.I felt like I had already failed at it before

…Even though

.I had never actually tried it at all

.That night, after the job interview, I sat writing in my notebook

.I had been doing that for years

:I wrote only one sentence

…How many times have I lived a bad day"

…only to discover that the one that was truly bad

"?was the day that preceded its arrival

.I closed the notebook

.And I turned off the lamp

…But the sentence

.remained lit inside me

(Chapter Five (continued

.I woke up to the sound of my phone

.It was half past eight

.I looked at the screen

.A number I didn't recognize

.I hesitated before answering

.I always hesitated

Even with ordinary calls, I felt they carried bad news waiting to be .delivered

.I picked up

"?…Hello, is this Miss"

".Yes"

This is Human Resources. We just wanted to let you know that you've" ".been accepted, and we're expecting you on Sunday morning

.I thanked him

.I hung up

.And I kept staring at the screen

.I had thought that if I got the job, I would feel relieved

.But the relief didn't come

.Something else came

?What will the first day be like

?What if I don't understand the system

?What if they ask me for something I don't know

?What if they discover that hiring me was a mistake

.I sat on the edge of the bed

.Then I laughed. A short laugh. As if I had caught my mind red-handed

…Three days ago

.I was afraid they wouldn't accept me

…And now

.I'm afraid because they did

…The problem changed

.but the fear remained

.In the evening, my father came into the room

:He said, smiling

".Your mother says we should celebrate"

:I said

".There's no need"

.He looked at me, puzzled

"?Why"

.I didn't know how to explain it to him

How could I tell him that I couldn't celebrate something that hadn't even ?started yet

How could I explain that my mind had already raced ahead to next week, ?and perhaps to next month as well

.I just smiled

:And I said

".After the first day… we'll celebrate"

.He nodded in agreement

.Then he left

…As for me

:I knew that when the first day ended, I would say

".After the first week"

:Then

".After the probation period"

:Then

".After the first year"

.And there was a question that bothered me

…If I kept postponing reassurance to the next station

?when would I ever feel reassured

.I opened my notebook

.I wrote the date

:Then I wrote a single line

.I used to think that fear disappeared when I reached what I wanted"

".But it seems to be waiting for me there

.I closed the notebook

.And the pen remained in my hand

.I felt the sentence was incomplete

.I opened it again

:And I added beneath it

…Perhaps"

.the problem isn't the road

…Perhaps

".I am carrying the road with me

.I closed the notebook slowly

.This time, I didn't feel that I had found an answer

.But I felt that I had begun to ask the right question

Chapter Six

.I arrived twenty-five minutes early

.It wasn't out of respect for time

.It was respect for fear

.I was more afraid of being late than I was eager to arrive early

.The building was quiet

.I entered and sat in the waiting area

.The clock read five minutes past eight

.Twenty minutes remained

…For anyone else

.it was twenty minutes

…As for me

.it was twenty chances for my mind to convince me to go back home…

.A young man walked in carrying a cup of coffee

.He was walking quickly

.He bumped into the edge of the door

.A little coffee spilled on his shirt

.He stopped

.He looked at the coffee

.Then he laughed

.Just laughed

.He took out a tissue, wiped his shirt, and continued on his way

.I kept watching him

…If I were in his place

.I would have spent a week thinking about it

:I would have said

".Everyone saw me"

".They'll think I'm careless"

".This image will stay in their minds"

…As for him

.he seemed to have forgotten it after thirty seconds

.They called my name

.I went in

.The department head was smiling

:She said

".Welcome"

.Then she stopped suddenly

.She looked at the file in her hand

:She put her hand to her forehead and said

".I apologize… I gave you the wrong name earlier"

.Then she laughed

.And apologized again

.I was surprised

.She was the boss

.And yet she made a mistake

.And no one tried to turn the mistake into a disaster

.I sat at my new desk

.There was an employee arranging some files

:She smiled at me and said

".In your first week, you'll feel like everything is complicated"

.Then she pointed to the files in front of her

After a month… you'll laugh because you used to think they were"
".difficult

.I smiled

.But I didn't believe her

.Not because she was lying

.But because my fear was speaking louder

.In the middle of the day, my supervisor asked me to enter some data

.I started working

.Then I stopped

.I was afraid I would press the wrong button

.I reviewed every line three times

.Then four

.Then five

.My supervisor walked past me

.He looked at the screen

:Then he said

"?Finished"

:I said shyly

".Just reviewing"

.He smiled

:And he said

…Reviewing is good"

".but in the end, you have to press the save button

.On Friday, Layla came to my desk

.She didn't work with us. She was a visitor

.She asked me where the nearest restroom was

.I directed her

.She thanked me, then suddenly stopped

.She looked at me, and smiled a faint smile

:She said

"?Your face looks familiar… haven't we met before"

:I said

".I don't think so"

:She said

".Maybe somewhere else… never mind"

.Then she went on her way

.I kept looking at her back as she walked away

.I didn't know why that moment stayed with me

.We hadn't said anything important

…But it made me think

?Do we pass through people's lives that easily

.We meet

.Then we forget

.We exchange short sentences

.Then nothing remains of them

…Except sometimes

.when a certain face stays in memory, for no clear reason

:I wonder

…How many people have passed by me

?and I didn't turn to look at them

…And how many moments would have meant something

?if I had only recognized them in time

.At the end of the day, I left the building a little late

.The sky was tilting toward pale blue

.I stood waiting for the bus

.Beside me was a woman carrying a bag of vegetables

.She was looking at her phone, frowning

:Then I heard her whisper to herself

"…I forgot"

.I turned to her unintentionally

.She looked up

:Then she said

"?Do you know if the grocery store is still open"

.I looked at my watch

".I think it closed ten minutes ago"

.She sighed

:And said

".It's okay… I'll buy tomorrow"

.Then she smiled

.Just smiled

"?She didn't say: "Oh no, what will I do

"?She didn't say: "How could I forget

.She didn't accuse herself of stupidity

:She just said

".I'll buy tomorrow"

.I got on the bus

.I sat in the back seat

:And I thought

?Why was this woman kinder to herself than I was to myself

…If I were in her place

.I would have spent the entire trip berating myself

.And perhaps that would have ruined my sleep

.And perhaps it would have stretched into tomorrow, ruining that day too

…As for her

.she left the forgetting behind her

:As if she were saying

".What happened happened. What matters is what happens next"

.I returned home

.I found my mother setting the food on the table

:My father said

".Today I bought fresh bread"

:My mother said

".I didn't ask you to"

:He said, laughing

".I know. But I saw it, and I liked it"

.This conversation wasn't important

.But it was natural

.And no one was expecting it to be perfect

.We sat down to eat

.There was no deep talk

.No solutions to life's crises

…But there was

.presence

.Being there

…And I

.perhaps I had been missing that more than anything else

…I was always there in body

.but my mind was elsewhere

.In tomorrow

.In next week

.In a scenario that hadn't happened yet

.That night, I looked in the mirror before going to sleep

.I looked for a long time

:I said in a whisper

"?How long have you been afraid"

.The mirror didn't answer

.But I saw a face I knew well

.Not because I had seen it often

.But because I had lived it often

.I turned off the light

.And lay down

:I told myself

…Tomorrow"

".I'll try to be here

:I didn't say

".I'll stop being afraid"

.Because I didn't believe that

:But I said

".I'll try not to get ahead of the days"

.It was a simple sentence

.But it was enough

Chapter Eight

.After two weeks, I received an email from an old friend

.She had left the city years ago

:She wrote

"?How are you"

.I didn't write back right away

.I was thinking about the reply

.I imagined myself writing

.I imagined her reaction to every word

.I imagined she might not reply

.I imagined she might be busy

.I imagined my words might be too long

.Or too short

.Or cold

.Or overdone

.I kept imagining for two days

.By the third day, I still hadn't replied

.In the evening, I talked to my mother about it

:She said to me simply

".Why all this thinking? Just write her two sentences"

:I said

"…But what if"

:She interrupted me

What if what? If she replies, that'll be lovely. If she doesn't, nothing will" ".happen

.I fell silent

.She was saying something I already knew

.But I wasn't living it

.I went back to my phone

:I wrote

"?I'm fine, and you"

.Then I sent it

.Minutes passed

:She replied

"!I'm fine too, I missed you"

.It was simple

.And short

.And it didn't need all that thinking

.That day, I realized something

.That what exhausted me most wasn't life itself

.It was my preparation for life

.I spent all my energy preparing for what hadn't yet come

…While people lived their lives

.I was preparing for theirs

.I went for a short walk in the evening

.The weather was calm

.I walked slowly

.I didn't plan which street to take

…And for the first time in a long while

.I didn't carry a list of possibilities with me

.I stopped in front of a large tree

.It wasn't special

.But it had been standing for a long time

.I looked closely at its trunk

.I saw traces of old wounds

.Breaks. Scars. Wrinkled bark

…And yet

.it was still growing

.It wasn't afraid to grow

.I sat on a nearby bench

.And I started to breathe

.Not the way I learned from books

.But the way a tree breathes

.Slowly

.Without rushing the outcome

.Without worrying if the leaves weren't perfect

.I returned home

.I didn't write in my notebook that night

.I didn't feel the need

…Perhaps because, for the first time

.I didn't have a question

.I had a feeling

:It was saying

".You are here"

.And that was enough

.Around noon, my supervisor asked me to send a file to a client

.I checked the name

.And I checked the email address

.Then I checked it a third time

.And I pressed send

.I felt a brief relief

.Then I returned to my work

.Less than ten minutes later, I heard my name

.I looked up

.My supervisor was standing at my desk

.In his hand was the very same document

:He said calmly

".You sent the file to the wrong client"

.My hand stopped

.I felt as if the entire office had gone silent

.Even though everyone was still talking

.I apologized quickly

.I took the file

.And I sent a correction message

.It took less than two minutes

.Then it was all over

…Just like that

.it was over on the outside

…But on the inside

.it had only just begun

.I could no longer hear my colleagues' voices

.I was hearing another voice

".It's over"

".They've discovered you don't deserve the job"

".They'll start watching you"

…This is the first mistake"

".and the next one will be worse

.I knew I was exaggerating

.But knowing didn't stop anything

:It was like someone standing in front of a small fire, saying

".This is just smoke"

.While the fire grew inside them

.The shift ended

.I left alone

.I didn't want to talk to anyone

.I kept replaying the scene in my head

.I had pressed the wrong email

.It was a simple thing

.But my mind didn't see it as simple

.It replayed it from different angles

?What if the manager thought I was careless

?What if he told the administration

?What if they recorded this mistake

…What if

…a year from now

?they remembered this moment

.I was riding the bus

.But I wasn't seeing the road

.I was sitting inside the minute I had made the mistake

.And I refused to leave it

:When I arrived home, my mother asked me

"?How was your day"

:I said

".Good"

.That wasn't a lie

.But it wasn't the truth either

.The truth was too complicated to be said while taking off my shoes

---

.I entered my room

.I sat on the floor, leaning my back against the bed

.Then I closed my eyes

.I remembered something from my childhood

.I was nine

.I broke a glass cup in the kitchen

.I stood crying before my mother even came

.I was sure she would be angry

.She came in

.She looked at the glass

.Then she looked at me

:And she asked

"?Did you hurt your hand"

:I said

".No"

:She said

".Thank God"

.Then she started gathering the broken pieces

.I kept watching her

.I was waiting for punishment

.But it never came

.I opened my eyes

.I don't know why I remembered that just now

.Perhaps because I discovered something strange

…Every time I make a mistake

.I beat everyone else to punishing myself

…Even if everyone forgives me

…I remain

.the only judge who refuses to close the case

.The next morning, I entered the office bracing myself for the worst

.I was sure my supervisor would call me in

.And talk to me about the mistake

.But nothing happened

.He passed by me

:He said

".Good morning"

.Then he asked if I had finished yesterday's report

…As if yesterday's mistake

.had truly become yesterday

…As for me

.I was still living it

.At the end of the day, I opened my notebook

…And instead of writing about the mistake

:I wrote a question

…If others have moved past what happened"

?why do I still refuse to move past it

…Is it because the mistake was big

or because my image of myself was fragile enough that a small mistake "?could shake it

.I closed the notebook

…And for the first time

.I wasn't looking for a way to prevent the next mistake

…I was trying to understand

.why I feared the mistake more than the mistake itself

Chapter Eight

.Her name was Reem

.She wasn't the smartest employee

.Nor the most talkative

.But she possessed something I didn't understand at first

…She dealt with her day

.as if it were just one single day

.Not a week
.Not a year
.Not an entire future

.On Monday morning, the power went out in the office for a few minutes
.Computers shut down
.The printer stopped
.And everyone started talking at once

:One person said
".All our work is lost"

:Another said
".They'll delay the file submissions"

…But Reem
.she turned off her computer screen
.Picked up her cup of tea
.And sat by the window

.She was looking at the trees moving in the wind

:I asked her
"?Aren't you worried"

.She turned to me
.She seemed more surprised by the question than by the power outage

:She said
"?Worried about what"

:I said
".About the work being delayed"

.She smiled
:Then she said quietly
"?And will the electricity come back faster if I worry myself"

.I didn't know what to say

.Ten minutes later, the power came back
.Everyone returned to their work
.And Reem returned too
.As if nothing had happened

…As for me
.I was thinking about her question

.She didn't say the delay was fine
.She didn't say worry was wrong
…All she said
.was that worry wasn't going to change anything

.A few days later, Reem made a mistake in a report
.I noticed it myself
.I was sure she would be upset

.But she took the paper
.She crossed out the line
.Then she rewrote it

.It was over

.I watched her in silence
:I asked her
"?Doesn't the mistake bother you"

:She said
".Of course it does"

"?Then why do you seem so calm"

.She thought for a moment
:Then she said
…Because being bothered by the mistake"
.is one thing
…Turning the mistake into a story about myself
".is something else entirely

.That sentence stayed in my head all day

…Turning a mistake
.into a story about myself

.Ihad always done that

.Ithought for a moment

:Then I said

".Sometimes"

.She smiled

"?'Just 'sometimes"

.I laughed

".Okay… more than sometimes. But not the way other people do"

.She leaned in

"?What do you mean"

.Isearched for the right words

Imean… I think about it like I think about a distant country. It sounds"
".nice from afar. But I'm not sure I'd want to live there

She looked at me with that look she always gave me when she thought I
.was overcomplicating things

".Maybe you've made it more complicated than it is"

.I shrugged

".Maybe"

:Then I said

"?But what if I choose wrong"

.She paused

.Then she said something I never forgot

"?What if you choose right"

.I didn't answer then

.And I didn't answer now, years later

.That evening, I sat with my mother in the kitchen

.She was chopping vegetables

.I was helping, mostly watching

:I said

".One of my colleagues is getting married next week"

.She smiled

"?Nice. Will you go"

".Yes"

.Silence for a moment

:Then she said

"?And you"

.I knew what she was asking

:I said

".Not yet, Mom"

.She didn't push

:But she said something quiet

".Just don't close the door before you even knock on it"

.I looked at her

.She said it without looking up from the vegetables

.It wasn't a lecture

.It was just a sentence

.And it stayed with me all night

.I opened my notebook before sleeping

:I wrote

.Mom said: don't close the door before you even knock on it"

…But the truth is

.I've been standing in front of closed doors my whole life

.Not because someone locked them

".But because I assumed they were locked

.I closed the notebook

.And lay in the dark

.I thought about Reem

.I thought about my mother

.I thought about the child in the street, laughing at his wet shoe

.All of them had something I didn't

.They didn't confuse life with the fear of it

.The next day at work, I was assigned to prepare a presentation

.It wasn't important

.Just a routine meeting

.But immediately, my mind started building scenarios

?What if I stutter

?What if someone asks a question I can't answer

?What if I forget the most important point

Iwassittingatmy desk, frozen, while the document waited in front of .me

.ThenIheardReem's voice from across the room

.Shewasn'ttalking to me

.ButIoverheard her

:She said

".I'llreaditonce, I'll practice it once, then I'll let it go"

.No more than that

.Iturnedbackto my document

:And I said to myself

".I'llwriteitonce. I'll review it once. Then I'll let it go"

.It wasn't easy

.My mind resisted

.Itwantedtoreview again

.And again

.And again

.But I stopped

.I closed the document

.And I walked away for a few minutes

.I didn't die

.The world didn't end

.And the presentation, when I gave it, was fine

.Not perfect

.But fine

…And that, I realized

.was enough

Chapter Nine

.The wedding invitation sat on my desk for a week

.Every time I saw it, I felt a small stir of something

.Not anxiety exactly

…More like

.curiosity

.I wondered how she did it

How she walked toward something so big without knowing how it would .end

…How she trusted that the thing she chose

.would be the right thing

…Or maybe

.she didn't need to know it would be right

.Maybe she just trusted herself to handle whatever came after

---

.On the wedding day, I wore a dress I hadn't worn in years

.I looked at myself in the mirror

.I didn't look like someone else

.But I looked like someone who could be different

.I arrived at the hall

.Music

.Lights

.Laughter

.People standing in groups, talking, eating, smiling

.I looked around

.Everyone here was moving through life

.Not waiting for a guarantee

.Not waiting for certainty

.Just moving

.I saw the bride

.She was glowing

.Not because she was beautiful—though she was

.But because she was there

.Full in the moment

.Not watching herself from outside

.Not wondering if she was doing it right

.Just… being

.I smiled at her from across the room

.She smiled back

:And I thought

.Maybe that's it

…Maybe the whole secret is just

.being there

.I sat at a table with colleagues

.We talked

.We laughed

.I forgot, for a few hours, to worry

.When the evening ended, I walked to the bus stop

.The air was cool

.The street was quiet

.And I felt something I hadn't felt in a long time

.Not relief

.Not happiness, exactly

.But presence

.I was there

.Not ahead

.Not behind

.Just there

.I opened my notebook that night

:I wrote one line

.Today, I didn't worry about the ending"

.I just watched

".And maybe that's how you start

.I closed the notebook

.And I slept

…And for the first time in years

.I didn't dream about the future

.I just slept

:I answered quickly

".No"

.She laughed

:And said

"?Or is it that you haven't found the right person"

:I said

".The issue isn't the people"

:She asked

"?Then what is it"

.I fell silent

…How could I explain to her that I wasn't afraid of a specific man

.I was afraid of the entire future

.I would read news about a woman who had been wronged

:And I would say

.Maybe that will happen to me

.I would hear about a divorce

:And I would say

.Maybe that's how I'll end up

.I would read about a husband who changed after years

:And I would say

?And how will I know he won't change

.My mind collected stories the way a child collects stones

.Then it built a wall from them

.And stood behind it

:And said

".I am safe"

.I arrived home

.I placed the invitation on my desk

.Then I sat in front of it

…Strange

.it was just a piece of paper

.But it had opened dozens of doors in my head

.I imagined myself after marriage

.Then I imagined myself after divorce

.Then I imagined a child crying

.Then a silent house

.Then a courtroom

.Then years

.Then loneliness

…All of that

.because of an invitation card

.I stopped suddenly

:And I asked myself

?How many stories had I just invented

?One

?Ten

?Or a hundred

.I picked up the card again

.I read it slowly

:All it said was

"…We are pleased to invite you"

.There was no divorce in it

.No injustice

.No courtroom

.No crying

…All of that

.I had written it myself

.On the wedding day, I sat at the far end of the hall

.I always liked the distant seats

…There

.no one notices you

.he just stands there...
.He examines every road
.Studies every stone
.Calculates the risks
.Then… goes back home without walking any road at all

.That night, I closed the book
.I had only read two pages
.But I had thought about my entire life

.The next day, I went to the office
.Everything was as usual
.But something inside me was beginning to shift
.I started noticing that my colleagues didn't plan everything
.They made mistakes
.They laughed
.They walked their paths without a complete map

:I would look at them and wonder
?How do they live without knowing the ending

:Then I realized something
…Perhaps the ending
.isn't part of the road
.It's what comes after you walk it

.I kept thinking about everything I had read and seen
.About my mother, who didn't fear
.About Reem, who didn't exaggerate
.About the old man who adjusted his wife's scarf
.About the bride who walked despite the uncertainty

…All of them knew one thing
.that life is lived forward
.Not by looking back, or stopping at the edges

.The following day, I didn't wait for permission from my mind
.I didn't wait to be completely ready
.I stood up
.And I moved

.Not because I had become brave
.But because I realized that courage isn't the absence of fear
.It's walking despite its presence

.He kept drawing new maps

.Sometimes I envied people

.Not because their lives were easier

.But because they made decisions

.I would see them change jobs

.Travel

.Get married

.Start small projects

.Lose sometimes

.Succeed sometimes

…But they

.they were living

…As for me

.I was studying life

.As if I were going to take a test about it

.Not live it

.I remembered an old day

.I was fifteen

.I stood in front of a small shop

.I wanted to buy a notebook

.I spent more than ten minutes comparing two colors

.The blue one

.And the green one

.I was afraid I'd regret it

:The shopkeeper laughed and said

".In the end… they're both notebooks"

.I laughed that day

.But I understood now

.The problem wasn't the notebook's color

.It was in my mind

…I thought every choice

.had to be the perfect choice

.On Sunday morning, I was organizing some files with Reem

:She suddenly asked me

"?What's wrong with you today"

:I said

".Thinking"

.She smiled

:And said

".I know"

:Then she added, as she put a file in its place

".But don't let thinking do the job of living"

.I looked up

She continued arranging the files, as if she hadn't said anything .important

…As for me

.I felt the sentence hanging in the air

.Don't let thinking do the job of living

?How many times had I done that

…I'd think about traveling

.instead of traveling

…Think about apologizing

.instead of apologizing

…Think about love

.instead of loving

…Think about life

.instead of living it

.On the way back, I got off the bus a little before my stop

.I wanted to walk

.The sun was tilting toward sunset

.And I saw two children racing

.One of them fell

.He got up quickly

.Dusted off his pants

.Then ran again

:He didn't sit on the curb to ask himself

?Why did I fall

?Should I have run

?Will I trip again

.He just… ran

.I watched him until he disappeared

.Then I smiled

:And I thought

.Perhaps that's why children learn to walk

…Because they don't demand perfection of themselves

.before they take the first step

.That night, I opened my notebook

:I wrote

.Today I discovered something painful"

.I'm not afraid of the road

.I'm afraid of discovering, years later, that I chose the wrong road

…But

?is there anyone who knows that before they walk

…Or does the road

"?only reveal itself to those who walk it

.I closed the notebook

.And turned off the lamp

…For the first time in a while

.I didn't try to find an answer before sleep

.I left the question as it was

…And I felt that this

.was a new kind of peace

Chapter Eleven

.There's a habit I didn't know I had

.I discovered it by accident

…Whenever something happened

.I would complete it

.Not in reality

.In my head

…If someone was slow to reply to my message

:I wouldn't say

".Maybe they're busy"

.I would write a whole ending

.Maybe they're annoyed with me

.Maybe I said something stupid

.Maybe they don't want to talk to me anymore

…Then I would act as if that ending

.had actually happened

…That morning

.I walked into the office

.I said hello

.Everyone replied

.Except one person

.He was looking at his computer screen

.And didn't look up

.I sat in my place

.And the story began

?Did I make him angry

?Did I make a mistake with him before

?Did he hear about my mistake last week

…Did

…Did

…Did

…About an hour later

.he came over to me

:And said, smiling

…I'm sorry"

.I didn't hear your greeting this morning

".I was wearing my earphones

.Then he pointed to them

.He laughed

.And asked me about a file

.Then he went back to his desk

.It was over

.But I kept staring at the screen

.I was thinking about the past hour

…A whole hour

…I had lived through a problem

.that didn't exist

.During the break, I went out to the small garden behind the building

.There was a white cat sleeping under a tree

.One of the workers passed by it

.It opened one eye

.Then closed it again

.It didn't assume he would hurt it

.And it didn't assume he would feed it

.It just watched to see what would happen

…As for me

.I always lived before the thing even happened

.I went back inside

.In the hallway, I saw a small sign hanging on the wall

:It said

".Report any malfunction to management immediately"

.I smiled

…And I thought

.My mind is like that sign

.Except it doesn't just report actual faults

.It reports the faults it imagines might happen too

.On the way back, the bus was crowded

.I stood by the window

.And the rain had started again

.I noticed something strange

.Each drop fell straight down the glass

.Then it met another drop

.And changed direction

.It didn't know in advance where it would end up

…It moved

.then its path shifted with what it encountered

:I asked myself

…Why do I ask my life to show me its entire shape

?before it even begins

.When I got home, I found my father fixing an old watch

.It was dismantled into dozens of pieces

:I asked him

"?Will it work again"

.He smiled

:And said

".I don't know"

:I said

"?And yet you're fixing it"

.He held a tiny piece between his fingers

:And said

…If I wait until I know the outcome"

".I would never start anything..."

.I fell silent

.He hadn't meant to give me advice

.He was talking about the watch

…But I

.I heard something else

:That night, I wrote in my notebook

…How many times have I added to reality"

?what wasn't there

…How many times did I create an entire dialogue inside my head

…and then suffered because of it

?before anyone even spoke a word

…Perhaps

.not everything I fear is false

…But

…not everything I imagine

".is true either

.I closed the notebook

.Then I looked out the window

.The rain was still falling

…And I thought

.The rain doesn't ask where each drop will fall

…It just

.falls

Chapter Twelve

.A new employee arrived at the department

.Management introduced him to us quickly

.The manager said his name

.Then pointed to the empty desk near my window

.He sat there

.And that was that

.Nothing worth mentioning had happened

…At least

.that's what I thought

.In the first few days, we barely spoke

".Good morning"

"?Does this file belong to the second department"

".Thank you"

.Just small words

.I liked that

.Small words don't carry much responsibility

.One day, the printer broke down

.Everyone gathered around it

.Each person suggested a solution

…As for him

.he looked at it for a moment

.Then he unplugged the power cord

.Plugged it back in

.And pressed the button

.It started working again

.Everyone laughed

:And one colleague said

".You were about to make us call a technician"

:He smiled and said

".Sometimes solutions start with the simple things"

.Then he went back to his desk

…As for me

.I kept thinking about that sentence

.Not because it was profound

.But because it was true

…How many times had I started with the hardest possibility

?and left the simple one aside

.In the afternoon, my supervisor asked me to review a report with him

.I sat in front of the screen

.And I started explaining

.In the middle of explaining, I made a mistake with a number

.I corrected it quickly

.And continued

.When we finished, I left the office blaming myself

?How did I make a mistake on such an obvious number

?Why didn't I pay attention

.As I was walking back to my desk, I passed by him

:He said

"?Is the report finished"

:I said

".Yes"

:Then, without realizing it, I said

".But I made a mistake with a number"

.He looked at me with surprise

:And asked

"?But you corrected it, didn't you"

:I said

".Yes"

:He said simply

"?Then where is the problem"

.He smiled

.And entered the archive room

…As for me

.I stood in the hallway

As if someone had pulled a chair out from under me that I'd been sitting .on for years

?Then where is the problem

.A small question

.But it unsettled me

…Because I used to think that a mistake

…remained a mistake

.even after fixing it

.On the way back, I remembered something

.When I was little, I loved to draw

.Once, I drew a tree

.Then I ruined one of the branches

.I tore up the entire paper

:My teacher said to me that day

".You could have drawn another branch"

.But I didn't

…I believed that a small mistake

.ruined the whole painting

…Perhaps

.that child hasn't changed much

.She just grew up

.That night, I kept thinking about the same question

"?Then where is the problem"

.I tried to answer

.The problem isn't the number

.Nor the report

.The problem is that, for years, I haven't allowed myself to be human

.I want to be a possibility that never makes mistakes

…And that

.is a possibility that doesn't exist

:I wrote in my notebook

…There is a difference between fixing a mistake"

.and refusing to forgive myself after fixing it

.I am good at the first

".But I haven't learned the second yet

.I closed the notebook

…And for the first time

.I felt that I didn't need a new answer

…I only needed

to believe the answers that life kept repeating in front of me every day, .while I refused to hear them

---

Chapter Thirteen

…After two weeks

.I began to notice something

.Not in him

.But in myself when I was near him

.I didn't feel the need to prove anything

.Perhaps because he wasn't expecting anything

.On Tuesday morning, the electronic system in the office went down

.The files stopped

.The requests stopped

.And everyone started waiting

.I was sitting in front of the black screen

.Looking at it

.And feeling anxious

.Work was stopped

.Time was wasting

…And suddenly

.I heard the sound of pages turning

.I turned around

.He was sitting at his desk

.He had taken out a small book from his bag

.And he was reading

:I asked him without realizing it

"?How can you read right now"

.He lifted his eyes from the page

:And said

".Because the system is down"

:I said

".But work is stopped"

.He smiled

:And said

".That's why I'm reading"

.I didn't understand

Perhaps because I believed that every minute should be under my .control

…As for him

.he dealt with things as they were

…If work stopped

.he stopped with it

…If it came back

.he came back to it

.I did the opposite

…If something stopped

.my mind started working in its place

…And compensated for the silence

.with a hundred thoughts

.In the afternoon, the system came back

.And everyone returned to their desks

.As if nothing had happened

.But I was thinking

…How many times had I refused to live the moment

?because I was busy resisting its existence

.At the end of the day, we went down together in the elevator

.The elevator stopped between floors

.And the lights went out for a few seconds

.I felt a tightness in my chest

.I started thinking

?What if it breaks down

"…What if we stay here? What if..."

:Before I could finish, I heard him say calmly

".It happens sometimes"

.Then he pressed the emergency button

:And said

".They'll get it working again shortly"

.He wasn't trying to reassure me

.He was just describing what was happening

.Nothing more

…Less than a minute later

.the elevator started moving again

.We got out

.As if nothing had happened

…As for me

.I was thinking

…In just one minute

.I had lived through the possibility of suffocation

.The possibility of a breakdown

.The possibility of rescue being delayed

…While he

.had lived through only one minute

.On the way back, I kept watching people on the bus

.A man reading a newspaper

.A woman looking out the window

A child laughing because he managed to stand without holding onto the .seat

…And I thought

?Do people actually live life as it is

?Or does each of them have a battle I can't see

…Perhaps

.I wasn't the only one carrying heavy thoughts

But I was the only one who thought she had to believe every thought that .crossed her mind

---

.When I arrived home, I found my mother preparing dinner

:She said, stirring the food in the pot

"?How was your day"

:I answered her

".Quiet"

.Then I stopped

.And I thought

…Months ago

:I would have said

".Exhausting"

.Even though the events themselves probably weren't that different

…What had changed

.was the number of stories I used to fabricate around them

.That night, I opened my notebook

.But I didn't write right away

.I kept looking at the blank page

:Then I wrote

…There are people"

…when the rain falls

.they look for an umbrella

…And there are people

.who stop first, look up at the sky, and then decide if they need one

…As for me

…I used to carry the umbrella

".even on sunny days

.I closed the notebook

.Then I smiled

.It was a small smile

.But it was different

.It wasn't because life had become easier

…But because I had begun to see that a large part of the exhaustion

.wasn't created by life

.I was creating it myself

Chapter Fourteen

…On Wednesday morning

.Reem wasn't at work

…At first

.no one noticed

.We thought she might be running late

.Then a call came

.And we found out

.Her father had passed away during the night

.Silence fell

It wasn't the kind of silence that happens when people don't know what .to say

…It was a silence in which everyone knew

.that words couldn't fix anything

.I went back to my desk

.And I was thinking

.Here is death

.Here is loss

.Here is the thing I had always feared

.It exists

.It happens

.And it's not just an idea

.I stared at the screen for a long time

:Then I asked myself

…If life can truly hurt a person this much

?then was my fear all these years justified

…In the evening

.we all went to offer our condolences

.Reem was sitting quietly

.Her eyes were tired

.But she was receiving people with a faint smile

.I sat close to her

.I didn't know what to say

.I just held her hand

…After a few minutes

:she said in a low voice

".I knew this day would come"

.I looked at her

:And she added

".But knowing didn't make the pain any less"

.She paused for a moment

:Then she said

…And if I had spent twenty years being afraid of it"

".today wouldn't have been any easier

…On the way back

.I couldn't get her words out of my head

"…If I had spent twenty years being afraid of it"

.I stopped at that sentence

.She didn't say death wasn't real

.She didn't say pain was an illusion

.She said something else

…Advance fear

.didn't pay the bill on her behalf

…When the pain came

.she felt it

.Like any human being

…But the years that preceded it

.didn't turn into protection

…They only turned into

.into years she had spent waiting...

.I arrived home after sunset

.I sat near the window

.The street was quiet

.And I thought about something that had never occurred to me before

.I had been living as if worry were a kind of insurance

…I thought that if I anticipated the disaster

.I would be prepared for it

?But would I really have been prepared

…If I lost my mother one day

…would a thousand days of fear

?lessen the pain of that day

.No

…And if my father fell ill

…would my tears be fewer

?because I had already cried in advance inside my imagination

.No

…So then

?what had I been doing all these years

.I opened my notebook

.And I didn't write quickly

.I wrote very slowly

.As if I was afraid the thought might slip away

.I used to think that worry paid the price of pain in advance"

.But life doesn't accept this kind of payment

…It takes its price

.when the time comes

…And what I pay before that

.is not protection

".It is time

.I put down the pen

.And I reread the sentence

.Then I closed the notebook

.And I felt something strange

…Life

.hadn't become any safer

…But it had become

.clearer

…And for the first time

.I understood that I wasn't afraid of the future

.I was trying to control it

…And that

.was something no one could do

Chapter Fifteen

…In the week following the condolence visit

.the office was quieter

.Not because people had stopped talking

.But because everyone spoke in softer voices

.As if grief had changed the tone of the place

.Reem returned

.Everyone welcomed her

.Then each went back to their work

.I liked that

.No one tried to act as if nothing had happened

.And no one tried to let grief take over everything

…Life

.knew how to walk beside pain

.Not ahead of it

.Nor behind it

.That day, I went out with some colleagues for lunch

.I sat listening more than I spoke

The conversation moved between work, vegetable prices, the power .outage, and a football match

They laughed. Then they went back to talking. I watched them in silence. Months ago, I would have been surprised. How could they laugh just days after Reem's father passed away? But now... I was beginning to understand. Laughter... is not a betrayal of grief. Just as grief... is not a .betrayal of life. The two can sit at the same table

---

When we returned to the office, I found the file I was working on was missing. I searched for it everywhere. My heart started racing. Not because of the file. But because I knew what would come next. "You'll lose it." "The manager will get angry." "They'll say you're careless." I knew the order of these thoughts by heart. Like an old song. But before it .could finish... I heard his voice

"?Are you looking for the blue file"

I turned. He was standing at the archive door. The file was in his hand. ".He said: "You left it at the photocopier

.I took it from him. And thanked him. Then I went back to my desk

Suddenly... I laughed. A small laugh. Reem noticed it. She said: "What's "?so funny

".Isaid:"Ijustdiscoveredthatmymindisfaster than reality

.Shesmiled.Andshedidn'taskmeanything further

Afterworkended,Iwalkedoutalone.Ididn't get on the bus right away. I .walkedalittle.Theairwascool.Thestreets were crowded

Isawamancarryingmanybags.Oneofthem fell. Oranges scattered acrossthesidewalk.Asmallchildrantogather them. Then another man followed.Thenawoman.Inlessthanaminute... everything was back in .thebag.Themansmiled.Thankedthem.Then continued on his way

Istoodwatchingthem.Irememberedmyself. How many times had I ?imaginedthatifIstumbled...Iwouldbeleft alone

…But the truth is

.thatpeople,mostofthetime,don'tjustwalk past a fall

.They reach out their hands

.WhenIarrivedhome,Ifoundmyfatherinthe small garden

.He was watering the lemon tree

:He said without looking at me

".Look at it"

.I looked

.One of the branches had dried up

:I said

".It looks like it's going to die"

.He shook his head

.Then he took the scissors

.And cut off the dry branch

:And he said

".The branch died"

.Then he watered the tree

:And added

…But the tree"

".is not this branch

.I kept looking at the spot where he had cut it

.The tree looked incomplete

…But it also

.looked lighter

.That night, I opened my notebook

:I wrote

…Perhaps I make mistakes because I always confuse the part"

.with the whole

…If I fail in one situation

.I say my life is a failure

…If someone rejects me

.I say I don't deserve anything

…If a branch dries up

.I say the tree has died

…But life

.does not judge that way

.It knows that a person is greater than one day

.And greater than one mistake

".And greater than one fear

.I closed the notebook

.Then I placed my hand on its cover

…And I realized that, since I started writing in it

.my life hadn't changed much

…What had changed

.was the way I had come to read what happens to me

…And perhaps

.that was the beginning of everything

Chapter Sixteen

…I began to notice his presence

.not because he started talking to me more

.But because I stopped watching myself every time I talked to him

.The conversations were simple

.About work

.About a book he had read

.About a new restaurant that opened across the street

…About the rain

.which seemed never to tire of visiting the city

.There were no big words

…And perhaps that was why

.I felt at ease

.One day, we all left the building after work

.The rain had suddenly started to fall

.Some colleagues ran toward the parking lot

…As for us

.we stood under the awning in front of the door

:He said, looking at the street

".Looks like we'll have to wait a bit"

.I nodded

.A short silence fell

:Then he said

".I love the rain"

.I smiled

:I said

".As for me… I always think it might cause accidents"

.He looked at me

.He didn't laugh

.He didn't say I was exaggerating

:He just asked

"?Does that stop you from going out when it rains"

.I fell silent

:Then I said

".No"

:He said

".Then… you know the answer"

.I didn't understand right away

.But I kept thinking about that sentence the whole way home

…That night

.I opened the window

.The rain was still falling

.I stretched my hand out slightly

.Cold drops touched my fingertips

…And I thought

.I don't hate the rain

.I hate what might happen because of it

…How many other things in my life

…had I not hated for what they were

?but hated the possibilities I attached to them

…Work

…marriage

…travel

…love

.These things didn't frighten me

…What frightened me

.were the stories I wrote after them

…A week later

.we were organizing old files in the archive

.The shelves were high

.I tried to reach one of the boxes

.But it was too high for me

.He came closer

.He took the box easily

.He placed it on the table

.Then he went back to his work

.The moment passed

.But it stayed in my mind

.Not because he helped me

.But because I noticed something

…If this had happened a year ago

.I would have spent the night thinking

?Did he help me because he pitied me

?Did he think I was weak

?Do I look incapable

…But now

.I saw it as it was

…Someone taller than me

.He took a box that was higher than me

.And that was it

…How simple life was

.before I got to it

…On the way back

.I sat by the window

.The glass reflected my face

.I looked at my reflection for a long time

:Then I asked myself

…Who would I be

?if my mind stopped writing endings before the stories even began

?Would I become someone else

…Or would I

?become myself for the first time

.I arrived home

.I found my mother sewing a button onto my father's shirt

.The whole process took a minute

…And yet

.she was doing it very calmly

:I asked her

"?Doesn't Dad know how to sew a button"

.She laughed

:And said

".He knows"

"?Then why do you do it for him"

.She smiled without looking up

:And said

…Because love isn't about others always needing you"

…it's about wanting to make things easier for them

".even in what they can do themselves

.I fell silent

.It was an ordinary sentence

.But it opened another window in my mind

.I used to think relationships were built on fear

.Fear of loss

.Fear of betrayal

.Fear of change

…But my mother

.was talking about something completely different

.About sharing

.About kindness

.About the small details that no one sees

…That night

:I wrote in my notebook

.Perhaps I was looking for a guarantee"

.While life was offering me something else

.To meet a person

.Not an insurance policy

.Because a guarantee doesn't exist

…But a person

".just might

.I closed the notebook

.Then I kept looking at the last sentence

.I felt it wasn't just about marriage

.But about all of life

…Perhaps

…everything worth living

.comes without a guarantee

Chapter Seventeen

.I didn't know when his presence became part of my days

…Perhaps because things that come quietly

.don't announce themselves

.I saw him in the morning

.We exchange greetings

.Then each of us starts their work

…And in the evening

.each of us leaves to their own life

…And yet

.I felt that workdays had become lighter

.Not because he filled them with words

.But because he didn't fill them with noise

.One day, my mother asked me to go with her to the market

.It was a warm evening

.The street was crowded

.She walked slowly, stopping at almost every shop

.Smiling at the vendor

.Asking about his well-being

And sometimes haggling over a few pennies, then laughing in the end .and buying it at the original price

:I said to her

".You would have saved money if you hadn't laughed"

:She said

".And perhaps I would have lost a human connection"

.I didn't understand

:I asked her

"?Does it matter"

She looked at me, then at the vendor who was helping an elderly woman .carry her bags

:And she said

".Life isn't just arithmetic"

.On the way back, I carried one of the bags

.And she carried the other

:She suddenly said

".You've gotten older"

.I laughed

:I said

".Only thirty years"

:She said

".When you were ten, you used to walk beside me and hold my hand"

.I looked at her hand

.It was the same hand

.But it wasn't the same anymore

.Fine lines had appeared on it that I hadn't noticed before

.I stopped without realizing it

:I said

".You've grown older"

.She smiled

:And said

".We all do"

…That night

.I couldn't sleep

.The reason wasn't a new thought

.But an old truth

.My mother is growing older

.And my father too

…And that means

.that time stops for no one

.Igot up from my bed

.Iwent to the kitchen

.Ifound my father drinking a glass of water

.He looked at me

:And said

"?Aren't you asleep"

:I said

".No"

:He asked

"?Thinking"

Ilaughed. I said: "How did you know?" He answered, smiling: "Because ".you're my daughter

We sat in silence. Then he suddenly said: "You know… when I was your ".age, I was afraid of many things

Ilooked at him in surprise. I never imagined that my father had ever .been afraid. He had always seemed to me… solid. Like a wall

Hesaid:"IwasafraidIwouldn'tbeabletobuildahome.""And afraid I wouldn'tbeagoodfather.""Andafraidofillness.""Andafraid of the future."Thenhetookasipofwater.Andadded:"Butthefuture didn't comeallatonce.""Itcamedaybyday.""Andeachday…Ionly dealt ".with that single day

---

Ididn'tsleepuntildawn.ButIdidn'tfeelsuffocatedlikeIused to. I was thinkingaboutonething.Iliveallthecomingyears…inasingle night.
.And that's why… I wake up tired

Atwork,dayslater,wewerearrangingfilestogether.Hesaid, smiling:
"You'redistractedtoday."Isaid:"I'mthinkingaboutthecoming years."
Helaughed.Thenhesaid:"Idon'tevenknowwhatI'mhaving for
".dinner

Ilaugheddespitemyself.Thenashortsilencefell.Afterthat, he said quietly:"Sometimes…whenIlooktoofarahead…Ican'tsee the road.
".But when I look at the next step… things become clearer

Hedidn'tsayitasifheweregivingadvice.Hesaiditasifhe were
.describing how he walked. But I… carried it home with me

Iopenedmynotebook.Iwrote:"Iusedtothinkcouragemeant not being afraid.Butperhaps…courageisstoppingmyselffromdemanding that I livetenyears…beforetomorrowevenarrives.Fortomorrow… will come
".on its own. But today… it is today that waits for me

.I closed the notebook

.Then I looked at the calendar hanging on the wall

…Tomorrow

.wouldn't hold my whole life

.It would hold only one day

…And perhaps

.that was lighter than I had thought

Chapter Eighteen

…On Monday morning

.I arrived at the office five minutes late

…And that alone

.used to be enough to make my whole day feel like a failure

.I walked in quickly

.I apologized

.I sat down

.Then I started reviewing the files

…Minutes later

.someone placed a cup of coffee on the edge of my desk

.I looked up

.It was him

:He said simply

…I ordered one for myself"

".and remembered that you don't start your day well without coffee

.Then he went back to his place

.He didn't wait for a thank you

.And he didn't try to make a moment out of it

.I looked at the cup for a long time

.What moved me wasn't the coffee

…But that he

.had noticed

?Since when

.I don't know

.I myself didn't know that I drank coffee at the same time every morning

?How did he know

…In the past

.I would have thought about it differently

.I would have started investigating

?Does he mean something

?Does he like me

?Does he want to say something

…Does

.I smiled

.Then I stopped

:I told myself

…Or"

…maybe he just

".remembered

…This was the first time

…I let a simple thought

.stay simple

.During the break, we all sat in the small garden

.The wind was gently moving the tree leaves

:One of the colleagues asked

"?If you could go back in time, what would you change"

.Everyone started answering

.One said he would choose a different major

.Another said he would have traveled

.Then it was my turn

.I thought for a moment

:Then I said

".I would worry less"

.They laughed

.And they thought it was a joke

.So I laughed with them

…But I was the only one

.who knew I was speaking seriously

.When the workday ended, we left the building together

.The sidewalks were still wet from the morning rain

:He said, looking at the sky

…It's strange"

".that we don't remember the number of days when the sky was clear

:I asked him

"?So what do we remember"

:He said

".The storms"

.We walked a few steps

:Then he added

…Even though the number of calm days"

".is far greater

.I didn't answer him

.But I felt that the sentence had hit me somewhere deep

…When I arrived home

.I sat by the window

.I tried to remember last week

…At first

.I only remembered Reem's father's death

.Then I stopped

.And I started searching

…There was also

.my mother's laugh in the market

.The smell of bread on Friday morning

.And that child running after a pigeon in the square

.And the sound of rain at night

.And the cup of coffee on my desk

.All of it was there

…But my mind

.had chosen to keep only the storm

.I opened my notebook

:I wrote

…Perhaps"

.the problem isn't that life is full of tragedies

…But rather that the mind

.remembers tragedies with greater precision

.Perhaps that's why the past seems harsher than it was

…And perhaps beautiful days

.don't need to shout to exist

…They pass quietly

".while we are busy searching for danger

.I stopped writing

.Then I looked at the page

…For the first time

.not all the sentences were about fear

.There was something else among them

.A small gratitude

.Quiet

.that doesn't draw attention...

…Just like

.happiness when it comes without noise

Chapter Nineteen

…Minutes before the end of the workday

.everyone was getting ready to leave

.I closed my computer

.Put the files in the desk drawer

.And picked up my bag

.Then I heard his voice

:He said quietly

"…If you don't have any plans"

.I turned to him

:He continued

"?Would you like to have a coffee with me before we head home"

.A short silence fell

.Very short on the outside

.And very long on the inside

…In one second

.my mind started working

?Why did he invite me

?Does he mean something

?What if I misunderstood

…What if I said yes

?and he only meant it as casual conversation

?What if he thinks I'm attached to him

…What if

…What if

…What if

…The thoughts were crowding in

.until I nearly forgot the question itself

:He smiled and said

".If you're busy, that's fine"

.I realized he was still waiting for my answer

.And not my thoughts

.I took a calm breath

:Then I said

…No"

".I'm not busy

…The words came out

.before my mind finished writing all the scenarios

…And for the first time

.I didn't wait for my fear's approval

.We chose a small café on a side street

.It wasn't crowded

.Nor fancy

.The music was low

.And the smell of coffee filled the place

.We sat by the window

…At first

.we talked about work

.Then about books

.Then about the city

.Then about things I don't remember

…The strange thing

.is that I don't remember the topics

.But I remember the feeling

.I wasn't watching myself

.I wasn't reviewing every word before I said it

And I didn't go home searching my memory for a sentence I had said .wrong

…I was

.present

.And that was new for me

…When we left the café

.the night had begun to drape its veil over the streets

.We walked slowly toward the bus stop

:Suddenly he said

"?Do you know something"

:I said

"?What"

:He said

".I used to think you were a person who didn't like to talk"

.I laughed

:I said

".On the contrary, I just think too much"

.He smiled

:And said

".I noticed"

.Then he paused for a moment

:And added

…But I think"

".you exhaust yourself more than you should

.I didn't feel angry

…Because it was the first time

…someone had described my fear

.without judging me for it

.The bus arrived

.I got on

.I sat by the window

.And I didn't look at my phone

.I looked at my reflection on the glass

:Then I asked myself

?What happened

.I went out with a man

.I drank coffee

.We talked

.Then I came home

.That's all

.None of the disasters my mind had drawn actually happened

.I smiled

.Then I shook my head

…How many times

…had I deprived myself of beautiful moments

?because I was living endings that hadn't even begun

…That night

.I didn't open my notebook right away

.I sat on the bed

.And closed my eyes

.Then I remembered something

…When I was a child

.I used to be afraid of the sea

.Not because I had drowned

.But because I imagined drowning

…The first time I went into the water

…I discovered that the real sea

.was different from the sea I had been carrying in my head

.I opened my notebook

:And I wrote

.There are two seas"

.One sea you walk toward with your feet

.And a sea built by your fear

.The first might be calm or turbulent

…But the second

.is always a storm

"…And for years

".I was living in the wrong sea..."

.I closed the notebook

.And turned off the lamp

…Before I slept

.a small thought occurred to me

…Perhaps

.life doesn't ask me to get rid of my fear

…Perhaps it only asks me

…to make sure

…that I don't confuse it

.with the truth

Chapter Twenty

…Months later

.I took the same bus

.At the same hour

.And I sat in almost the same seat

.I didn't plan it

.I realized it after I sat down

.I smiled

…As if the city

.was returning an old page to me

.The bus stopped

.An elderly woman got on

.She was carrying a small cloth bag

.And looking for a seat with her eyes

.I stood up automatically

:I said

".Please, take my seat"

.She smiled and sat down

.She thanked me

.Then she placed the bag on her lap

…A few minutes later

.she turned to me

:And said

"?Do you work"

:I said

".Yes"

.She smiled

:Then she asked

"?And married"

.I felt that the question had taken me years back

.It was the same question

…But the person hearing it

.was no longer the same person

.I smiled

:And I said quietly

".Engaged"

.The woman was delighted

:And said

".May God grant you a good life"

.I thanked her

.Then I turned back to look out the window

…Months ago

…if anyone had asked me this question

.my mind would have started listing every reason for failure

.Divorce

.Arguments

.Betrayal

.Illness

.Loss

…But now

.those possibilities still existed

.But they were no longer alone

…There was also now

.Faithfulness

.Affection

.Ordinary days

.Laughter at the dinner table

.Disagreements that end with an apology

.And exhaustion that lightens when two people share it

.The world hadn't changed

…What had changed

.was the scale I used to weigh the world

…When I got off the bus

.I remembered the elderly woman I had met months ago

.I remembered her hands

.Her wrinkles

.Her grandson laughing beside her

…That day

.I had seen only the ending

…I saw the wrinkles

.but not the years that came before them

…I saw loneliness

.but not the years that could be filled with people

…I saw loss

.but not what could be lived before it

.I returned home

.I found my mother folding some clothes

:She said, smiling

".The date is approaching"

.I nodded

.Then I went into my room

.I sat on the bed

.And I looked at my notebook

.It was full

.Many pages

…Each page

.held an old fear

.I smiled

.Then I opened the first page

.I read what I had written at the beginning

".I am afraid"

.I closed it

.Then I opened the last page

.And I didn't write much

:I wrote only one line

…I am still afraid"

".but I no longer let fear live my life in my place

.I closed the notebook

.And I placed it in the drawer

.I no longer needed to carry it with me every day

.Not because the questions had ended

…But because I

…had learned to live

.even when I didn't have all the answers

The Final Chapter

.Five years passed

.Sometimes I try to remember the woman I used to be

.I feel she looked very much like me

.But she wasn't quite me

.I wake up every morning before everyone else

.I make coffee

.Then I open the window

.I still love watching the street wake up

.The baker raising the door of his shop

.A student running because he's late

.A man carrying his work bag

.And a postman crossing the street slowly

…Life

.hadn't changed much

.I was the one who had changed

…From the next room

.I heard a small voice

"…Mama"

.I smiled

.I put the coffee cup on the table

.And went into the room

.My son had woken up

.His hair was tousled

.And his eyes were half-closed

.He raised his hands toward me

.I picked him up

.And he rested his head on my shoulder

…At that moment

.I remembered something

…Years ago

.I was afraid to get married

.Then I was afraid to love

.Then I was afraid to become a mother

…I saw a thousand ways this scene could break

…and so

.I almost deprived myself of it

.We went out to the kitchen

.My husband was trying to make breakfast

.And he burnt a piece of bread for the umpteenth time

.I laughed

.He looked at me

:And said, smiling

…Don't laugh"

".I'll succeed one day

:I said

".You said that last week"

.We laughed

.Then we sat down to eat the burnt bread

.And it wasn't that bad

…No

.our life wasn't perfect

.We argued sometimes

.We each fell silent for days sometimes

.We disagreed about money

.And about raising the child

.I cried once because I felt I wasn't good at being a mother

.And he cried once when his father fell ill

…And there were long nights

.where I didn't know what to do

.But one thing no longer happened

…I no longer lived those nights

.before they arrived

…On an autumn evening

.I went to the park with my son

.He was running after butterflies

.Then he suddenly stopped

.He came up to me

.And pointed to a tall tree

:He said

…Mama"

"?what if a leaf falls on my head

.I smiled

.I sat down in front of him

:I said

".It might fall"

.He looked at me

.Waited for the rest of the answer

:I continued

".And it might not fall"

.He stayed silent

:I said

…Would you stop playing because of a leaf"

"?that might not even fall at all

.He thought for a moment

.Then he ran after another butterfly

.I watched him as he moved away

.And I felt something warm pass through my chest

.I wasn't just answering my son

.I was answering the woman I once was

…At night

…after everyone had gone to sleep

.I opened the drawer

.I found my old notebook

.The cover had faded

.And the pages had turned slightly yellow

.I sat down to read

.Page after page

…Every fear

.had seemed so real when I wrote it

…And every possibility

.had seemed like the end

.Then I smiled

.Not because those fears were silly

.But because they were sincere

.I truly had been in pain

.And I truly had believed everything my mind whispered to me

.I closed the notebook

.And I put it back in its place

.I won't throw it away

.Because it reminds me of someone I don't want to forget

.The girl who, despite everything, tried to live

…Before I turned off the lamp

.I stood by the window

.The rain was falling softly

.I stretched out my hand

.A drop fell on my fingertips

.I smiled

.I remembered myself from years ago

…I used to look at the rain

.and think about accidents

…But now

…I look at it

.and think about its scent

…And for the first time

…I realized that the rain

.had never changed

…What had changed

.was the story I used to tell myself about it

.I closed the window

.And turned off the light

…And tomorrow

…when I wake up

.I will worry about something

.I know that

.But I also know something else

…I won't let fear

…live my day

.on my behalf

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.The End